

Mason Independent School District

P.O. Box 410
Mason, TX 76856

Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

April 24, 2012

In the Matter of)	
)	
Lifeline and Link Up Reform and)	WC Docket No. 11-42
Modernization)	
)	
Lifeline and Link Up)	WC Docket No. 03-109
)	
Federal-State Joint Board on Universal)	CC Docket No. 96-45
Service)	
)	WC Docket No. 12-23
Advancing Broadband Availability Through)	
Digital Literacy Training)	

Dear Sir/Madame:

I am writing today in response to the FCC's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking which, among other things, proposes a Digital Literacy Pilot to fund schools and libraries operating digital literacy training courses. Before delving into my response to the proposed pilot, I want to first thank the FCC for your continued support for the E-Rate program. The E-Rate program provides critical discounts to assist schools like Mason ISD in obtaining affordable telecommunications and internet access that without E-Rate funding would be difficult if not impossible to fully fund.

Mason ISD is a small geographically isolated rural district over 100 miles from the nearest metropolitan area. Approximately 60% of Mason ISD students are economically disadvantaged and over one-third of district students are at-risk of dropping out of school based on state-defined criteria. Mason has historically been an agriculture based community without any industry and the county's median household income rates in the bottom 10% of the state. The district has been blessed for the past thirteen years to receive E-Rate funding that has reduced the cost of telecommunication, internet access and internal connections and allowed the district to have access to technology that it would not have been able to afford without the E-Rate discount.

The pilot would provide grants to K-12 schools and libraries, lasting four years, to hire trainers, conduct training courses and provide resources/materials to those who lack digital literacy skills. While the FCC does not propose to fund the pilot using E-Rate funds, it does propose implementing and administering the program through the same division that oversees the E-Rate program. Specifically, the FCC proposes implementing/administering the program through the Schools & Libraries Division of the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC).

I am concerned that operating the pilot through E-Rate will undermine the important and ongoing work of E-Rate, causing delays in the program's application and appeal processes, creating auditing problems and results in problematic precedents for E-Rate's eligible services. **Specifically, I oppose the proposal to operate/administer the proposed pilot through the E-Rate program.**

Making any changes to the E-Rate program that might result in decreased funding or the efficiency with which USAC currently operates would be detrimental to the school districts that depend on discounts from the E-Rate program. School districts have been hit hard over the past few years with funding cuts at the local, state and federal level and jeopardizing access to technology due to E-Rate funding cuts would be catastrophic to the education of students.

Thank you for considering my response as you move forward with your decision on the Digital Literacy Pilot. I applaud the FCC for its continued efforts to protect the already oversubscribed E-Rate program by not funding the pilot with E-Rate funding. I urge you to take similar protective measures when it comes to the implementation and administration of the pilot; please ensure that critical, limited E-Rate resources—both fiscal and administrative—are protected.

Sincerely,



Pam Kruse, Superintendent
Mason Independent School District

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